

Just what you've always wanted! It's...

THE VOICE OF DOOM

#99

September 4, 1984

Circulation: 113

by BRUX

The sand enclosed with this issue is from Jones Beach on Long Island. I picked it up especially for you while at KaneKon because I wanted you to be able to share in the experience.

And KaneKon was indeed a blast this year. Attending were Eric Kane (naturally), Dave Lincoln and his kids Rebecca and Bryan, John Ferguson, Brian Lorber, Steve Brooks, Ken Halpern, Steve Hutton (who rode down with me), Phil Dancause, Scott Cameron, Kevin Stone, Nick Felsella, and some other Great Neck locals whose names escape me now. I believe that write-ups will appear in Anduin and No Fixed Address if you want more details. The trip to Jones Beach was just one of the highlights; we played many different games and went out to eat at many different restaurants. Games played included Acquire, Civilization, Score Four, Family Business, Trivial Pursuit, and Diplomacy, though I didn't get involved in any games of Dip. I had a very successful con in terms of game results, winning one of the two Acquire games, finishing second in Family Business, winning Score Four, doing very well in an unfinished game of Civilization, and winning at Trivial Pursuit with Kevin Stone as my partner. But more importantly, I and everyone else had a great time. KaneKon is my favorite con. There is none of the nastiness that has marred other east coast cons in recent months. And, I see that I forgot to mention that we also played a marathon game of Rail Barro. I didn't win that one, but for a time it looked promising. I'd never played the game to conclusion before. I used to own a copy of the game, but sold it. Now I intend to purchase it again, along with Civ. Thanks to Eric and his parents for putting us up and showing us a great time.

Last issue was read with considerable interest by several of the people in my office. One, a girl named Ida Campagna, wanted to know whether Highfield is for real. Generally VD is read by my boss Tony and one or two of my other co-workers who enjoy it; last issue received wider circulation there. It was, well, flattering to know that some of them found it interesting, especially when I pause and consider that these people are by and large normal. And, I should add, extremely nice. One of the girls baked up a bunch of chocolate cupcakes for my birthday last week, a bunch of the people got me a nice card, and we had a little party right there in the office on August 16 when I turned 29. It was neat. I'll make them honorary Doomies, I think.

The Voice of Doom is a journal of postal Diplomacy published every now and then by Bruce Linsey, 73 Ashuelot St., Apt. 3, Dalton, MA 01226. Phone (413) 684-0567. Subs are 10 issues for \$5.00. Standbys are wanted. There are no game openings.

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The deadline for all games contained herein is September 28, 1984.

Zines continue to trickle in slowly as the summer takes its toll on people's hobby-related activities. Several haven't been seen here in quite a while as I type this, including Cathy's Ramblings, Festungs Hof, Raging Main, and Magus. Magus' delay is due to Steve and Daf Langley's move to a new home, and Steve was also quite sick recently. Hope things are better now, Steve, and good luck to both of you in the new place.

Late also is High Plains Gonzo as Jake has had a rough time of it lately, including an intestinal operation. I spoke with him recently and he's better now. Straight From the Dimer's Mouth is months overdue and may have folded, I understand from a secondhand source. Meanwhile, Simon Billenness informs me that The Acolyte in Great Britain has folded suddenly, but he had no details. I hope everything's OK with Pete and Kathryn Tamlyn. Acolyte will be greatly missed here.

Have I missed any? Undoubtedly. On to more positive things. The British Zine Poll results are out, and perennial winner Greatest Hits has slipped, astonishingly, to a position in the twenties. Hopscotch was this year's winner, followed by NMR!. See any of several British zines or probably Europe Express for more detailed results.

Anduin #34 is out and contains an entertaining writeup of KaneKon, far better than the one you just read. Eric will be publishing his third anniversary issue this month, and is considering folding since college will be taking up his time. Eric, that's a horrible idea! How am I going to deal with the withdrawal symptoms if you fold? Please keep it coming -- I'm sure a large number of people will miss you otherwise. KaneKon will continue next year, however, and I will most probably be going as usual. KaneKon is my favorite con.

The Diplomat #30 contains a brief statement by Dave Kleiman, stating that he has no interest in reading all of the controversial items that have been appearing in zines lately. Curiously, I agree (referring, of course, to feud-type controversies.) I will comment here only that it's easy to say that sort of thing, and to practice it as well, when you yourself aren't under attack.

Thirty Miles of Bad Road #27 came in the form of a beer can, highlighting Luedi's typically fertile imagination. An insert with the issue promises me that as one of his "Darling 23", I will be receiving TMOBR #28. From the description he gave, this promises to be a rather unusual issue, and most of his subbers won't be getting it. I'll let you know what it's all about next issue, if I get it in time.

Diplomacy Digest #82 has an excellent summary of both sides in the dispute surrounding whether the games run on Wes Ives' Wordworks are variants. My own opinion is that they are. Then again, as has been said here in the past, I believe that all electronic mail games are variants. Look, I know that remark isn't going to go down well with the PHEM folks out there, but the play is fundamentally different than play-by-mail. If you ask me to get specific and pinpoint the difference, I can't -- it's just a radically different flavor, that's all. And I'm no neo-Luddite who feels threatened by the Age of Computers, either. I'm a professional computer programmer. But I still figure them games is variants.

Sleepless Knights #35 contains several letters protesting the particularly nasty Foot in Mouth that had appeared in #34, though Dave Carter still seems himself to be clinging to the belief that Caruso's "humor" is funny.

In Fol Si File #158, Randolph Smyth gives the results of the Runestone Poll in detail, including those zines/subzines/GMs that didn't make the main lists. I see that somebody out there voted VD's Gossip Column a "6" as a subzine. Well, whoever you are, thanks much -- ya wise guy! Randolph also indicated that he'd decided to scrap his plans to publish a preference matrix of the results, since it would take an awful lot of time. So the results you've read in VD #97 and elsewhere are final.

Feuillstonist's Forum #1 arrived with a note from Greg Ellis scrawled on the inside cover: "Is Garry Ferraro really Kathy Byrne in disguise? Or maybe John C. in drag? I hope neither, since they have enough Diplomacy experience to pull off a coup. Somehow, with the remarks she's made so far, I doubt that she is a diplomat." Me too, Greg. But I wish that Garry were Kathy. After all, isn't it true that most

vice-presidents are never heard from again?

Frobos #5 contains an explanation of how Jeff Richmond prints his zine -- on a large mainframe computer called a Sigma 9. I'd never heard of it. Frobos is perhaps the best looking zine out these days, with printing as clear as any magazine, graphics, and right justification.

Mark Frush is the winner of the 1984 Nixon Award for the outstanding use of lies in a Diplomacy game, and Murd'ring Ministers #72 contains his acceptance speech. Congratulations, Mark!

Bushmacker number something-or-other (he uses this "Volume XXX, Number YYY" system so nobody knows what number the issue is) informs us that its publisher is not the same Fred Davis who received two heart transplants in Augusta, Georgia. Well, I'll believe him, I guess; but the Fred Davis I know is all heart!

The photo contest answered in Europe Express #36 shows a man and a woman, both in costumes, so that I couldn't tell who they were. However, on inspection, it appears that he is holding and supporting her. Why didn't I guess that that was Ed Wrobel and his wife?

Midlife Crisis #15 contains a statement from Terry Tallman about grumpy hobbyists: "Those who growl the loudest are listened to the least." A very observant bit of self-analysis there, Terry.

So I Lied #2 contains an issue of Foot in Mouth, and plenty of good reading as well. The zine is heavily oriented toward the Midwest Mob, basically a friendly bunch of folks. I called MadCon on Memorial Day weekend, and got to speak with a number of those present. Everyone was so friendly. Maybe I'll join Mike Barno and apply for honorary membership in the Mob. Of course they'd take me. I just don't belong in the East Coast Clique.

NMR! is one zine that doesn't want for imagination. Shortly following the arrival of number 50 on cassette tape, 51 arrived with a supposedly 3-D cover! Quite a few of the letters deal with the full frontal cover that appeared on issue 48. I for one enjoyed it, and hope that another like it will soon appear. I understand that Liberterranean also had a nude female featured. Well, since this seems to be the trend, keep your eyes open for my next issue -- although it's doubtful that the photo I'm thinking of running will make the front page. I'll only give you one hint -- it's a nude picture of a female hobby member. Any guesses out there?

I wish I could read Dutch so that I could understand my copy of Oxymeron 35. It's apparent that the hobby is large and well-entrenched in The Netherlands. The issue is a whopping 36 pages long, and contains the afore-mentioned British Zine Poll results.

No Fixed Address #21/22 includes a hilarious play by Steve Hutton, whose plays always include me. When Hutton writes, people listen. (Grooan...) NFA also features cryptic puzzles with each issue, and which I find very challenging. I'm the first person (I believe) to take up Steve on his offer of a FREE BOOKLET on how to solve cryptic crosswords, available from him on request. The issue contained a long and interesting letter column, mostly from Rod Walker, as well.

Ter-ran #95 announces that Steve Heinowski has game openings. This is one of the most reliable zines around, and though the group of subbers seems just a bit cliquish (Steve calls it a family-style zine), I would recommend it for play. Steve lives at 12034 Pyle, Oberlin, OH 44074.

Page 15 of my copy of The Diplomat #29 contained a listing of the entire contents of Ty Hare's brain. That's right, Dave, my copy of that page was totally blank! Hee, hee...

In The Little Dipper #10, a subzine to The Prince, Stephen Wilcox asks the question, "Do GMs affect the play of the game by attaching season headlines to their adjudications?" He adds that "I have never seen a discussion on this subject and would like to get one going here." Gee, that sounds like an interesting topic. I wish I'd thought of it first. (:) Alas, I won't be getting to see any more copies of TLD. Jim Meinel has closed subscriptions to The Prince, making it unavailable to everyone except players and standbys. My refund check was enclosed with the issue.

Voice of Doom #99, just out, had to curtail its "Hobbytalk" column for the second issue in a row. BRUX promises a big one for his fifth anniversary next month, however.

Like clockwork as always..it's the VD GAMES!!!

ORION

1982Y

DON'T YOU THINK THIS GAME IS GETTING KIND OF STALE, MATE?

Winter 1914

ENGLAND: Build F LVP

FRANCE: even

GERMANY: Build A KIE

ITALY: NBR! Will play one short.

RUSSIA: even

TURKEY: even

Spring 1915

ENGLAND (Ansoff): F IRI-Mid (F NAT S), F LVP-Iri, F NWY S-RUSSIAN A StP

FRANCE (Williams): F BRE S A Gas, A GAS S GERMAN A Bur

GERMANY (Wittmond): A BER H (F BAL S, A KIE S), A BUR S FRENCH A Gas, A RUH S A Bur, F ENG S ENGLISH F Iri-Mid

ITALY (Howerton): F MID S TURKISH F Spa(nc)-Gas, F POR S F Mid, F WES S F Mid, Mar S A Mun-Bur (imp), A MAR U, A PIE S A Mar, A MUN-Bur, A TYO-Mun (A BOH S)

RUSSIA (Beyerlein): A STP H

TURKEY (Leritte): F SPA(nc)-Gas, F NAF S ITALIAN F Mid, A PRU-Ber, A MOS-StP (A LVN S), A Sev-UKR, A Bul-RUM, F BLA H, A WAR-Gal, A GAL-War, F LYO-Spa(sc), A SIL S ITALIAN A Tyo-Mun

Game Notes: George Leritte has returned as Turkey. Thanks much to Pat Conlon for the standby orders and press, which turned out to be unneeded.

The Italian order for A Mar is invalid, as the type of unit was not stated. The orders for the Turkish units in War and Gal both fail because two units may not exchange places without a convoy.

The E/F/G/I/R/T draw proposed last season did not pass. Proposed for next season are an E/F/G/I/R/T draw and an I/T draw. Please vote by next deadline.

Press:

GERMANY to ENGLAND: I got a build! I got a build! Of course, I had to mail the orders where I remembered the retreat too late to meet the deadline, and then trust Turkey to NMR and Italy not to attack Kiel, but it was worth it!

TURKEY to GERMANY: Here's your draw proposal. Let's see you vote no to it.

In Diplomacy World #38, Mark Borch writes that "I believe that a unit ordered to move cannot be supported in place simply because the player has chosen an impossible order." In other words, he says that an order of F Mid-Hol would prevent any attempts to support F Mid in place.

In Voice of Doom #29, criticizing a VD Houserule that concurred with the above ruling, Mark wrote, "A Por-Par is an illegal order; as such it 'stands in its place' (rule VII.4) and thus can be supported... It's best to look at any illegal order as the same as an unordered piece, i.e. both lack legal orders, and we know from XIV.3 that unordered units can be supported..."

Thus, the Master of Diplomacy Logic has changed his mind on this vital point. Now, some might argue that this is because he too is only human, but I disagree. The real reason for this waffling is simply that Mark likes to argue. Right, Mark?

GERMAN COMEBACK HOPES DEALT SEVERE BLOW!

Summer 1912

AUSTRIA: A Tyo r TRI

ENGLAND: A Gal r UKR

TURKEY: A Sev r ARM

Fall 1912

AUSTRIA (Lucas): A Tri-TYO (A VEN S, A VIE S), A ROM S A Ven, A BUD S A Vie

ENGLAND (Glaspy): A Ukr-WAR (A LVN S, A MOS S), A Sev-Ukr (ann), F TYR-Ion,

A RUH S FRENCH A Mun, F KIE H, F BER H, F BAL H, F NTH H

FRANCE (Burd): A MUN H, F NAP S ENGLISH F Tyr-Ion, F TUN S ENGLISH F Tyr-Ion,

F LYO-Tyr, A TUS H (A PIE S)

GERMANY (Howerton): A War H (d; r Pru, Sll, OTB), A Tyo-Tri (ann), A Sll-BOH

TURKEY (Sweeney): F ION S ENGLISH F Tyr-Nap (NSO), F GRE S F Ion, F AEG S F Ion,

A Bul-RUM, A Rum-SEV (F BLA S, A ARM S), A GAL-Ukr

Supply Center Chart:

AUSTRIA: Vie, Tri, BUD, Ser, Ven, Rom

6, build 1

ENGLAND: Home, Bel, Nwy, Den, Hol, StP, Swe, Mos, KIE, BER, WAR

13, build 4 (room for 3)

FRANCE: Home, Tun, For, Spa, MUN, NAP

8, build 2

GERMANY: ~~Vld~~, ~~Vld~~, ~~Vld~~, ~~Vld~~

0, remove 2 (out)

TURKEY: Home, Bul, Gre, Rum, Sev, ~~Vld~~, ~~Vld~~

7, remove 1

Press:

CONSTANTINOPLE to WORLD: Be it known far and wide that the basotten heathen in command of the Austrian military forces -- the so-called Archduke of Madcap -- has violated Turkish sovereign territories by supporting the attacks of foreign powers on loyal Turkish units; has attacked despite the willing evacuation of Turkish forces from Budapest; has refused correspondence from His Eminence and killed the bearer of same; has openly communicated with enemy foreign powers; has moved his military forces so as to threaten Turkish colonies and has refused to renew foreign trade agreements.

Be it known that all military support of Austrian forces shall cease until such time as one (or more) of the following conditions are met:

- 1) Austrian forces arrange the retrieval of Naples or a comparable colony;
- 2) Rearrangement of Austro-Hungarian forces to face the obvious E/F threat.
- 3) Re-open negotiations on a personal level with the Sultan after providing a suitable hostage as guarantee of good faith.

As Allah has spoken, through the mouth of His Sultan, so shall it be done!

CONSTANTINOPLE to WARSAW: German occupation of this city will probably cease shortly, very shortly, and I also believe -- your existence. Goodbye again, Mar. Howerton -- we were too far to be friends and far too close to be enemies!

CON to ION: I do believe Germany was "Byrne'd"!

I neglected to mention in my Hobbytalk section that both Erehwon and Graustark are late in arriving here. This is surprising as Graustark, especially, has a history of reliability. #496 was due out several weeks ago. I have written Boardman asking about this, but as yet have received no response. My Graustark sub expires with #501.

Erehwon I expect will arrive shortly; after all, I just got a big issue of Diplomacy World from Walker a few days ago...

R I G E L

1983K

DO'ST THOU DESERT ME, O RIGEL? COME BACK...

Summer 1907

FRANCE: F Ion r EAS

RUSSIA: A StP r FIN

Fall 1907

AUSTRIA (Knight): A Bud-SER (A TRI S), A Vie-BUD

FRANCE (Hare): F Eas-ION (F NAP S), F Smy-Aeg (d; r Eas, OTB), F Lyo-TYR (F TUN S),
F Wes-MID, A Pie-TUS, A Bel-ION (F ENG C)GERMANY (Heintzman): F Hlg-NTH (F NWY S), A Den-KIE, F Bal-SWE, A Kie-HOL, A Sil-GAL,
F BOT-StP(sc), A StP-MOS (A WAR S), A VEN S A APU, A APU S A VenRUSSIA (Kleiman): A Mos S A Rum-Ukr (d; r Lvn, Sev, OTB), A Rum-UKR, A FIN-StP,
A Ser-RUM, F Bul(sc)-BLA, F NAT-LVP

TURKEY (Reilly): F Con-SMY (A SYR S, F AEG S), A Gre-BUL, F Ion-GRE

Supply Center Charts:

AUSTRIA: Home, SER

4, build 1

FRANCE: Home, Spa, Por, ~~StP~~, Tun, Bel, Nap, LON

9, even

GERMANY: Home, Hol, Den, Ven, Edi, Rom, Nwy, Swe, MOS, WAR, ~~Ypp~~

12, build 21

RUSSIA: ~~(Kleiman)~~ StP, ~~Vot~~, ~~Vat~~, Sev, Rum, LVP, ~~StP~~

4, remove 2

TURKEY: Home, Bul, Gre

5, even

Autumn 1907

FRANCE: F Smy r OTB

RUSSIA: A Mos r SEV

Winter 1907

AUSTRIA: NBR! Will play one short.

FRANCE: Build A Par (imp) Will play one short.

GERMANY: Build A MUN

RUSSIA: A Fin, F Lvp

TURKEY: even

Spring 1908

AUSTRIA (Knight?): NMR! A SER U, A TRI U, A BUD U

FRANCE (Hare?): NMR! F ION U, F NAP U, F TYR U, F TUN U, F MID U, A TUS U, A LON U,
F ENG UGERMANY (Heintzman): A Hol-EDI (F NTH C), A Kie-HOL, A MUN H, F NWY H, A MOS H (A WAR S),
F SWE H, A GAL H, F BOT H, A VEN U, A APU URUSSIA (Kleiman): F BLA S A Rum, A RUM S A Ukr, A SEV S A Ukr, A UKR U,
F Ukr S AUSTRIAN A Bud-Gal (NSU)TURKEY (Reilly): F Smy-EAS (F AEG S), A SYR H, A BUL S F Gre, F GRE S A Bul

Game Notes: The summer and fall 1907 seasons are readjudicated above, for reasons given on pp 19 & 20. Please stand by for Austria: Jim Chatfield, 7505 Kenlea Ave., Baltimore, MD 21236; and for France: Jeff Panches, 4520 La Portalada Dr., Carlsbad, CA 92008. COA: Rich Reilly, Upham Hall Room 308, Moscow, ID 83843 and Ty Hare, 1001 N. Weber #204, Colorado Springs, CO 80903. All proposals last season failed. Now proposed are an F/G draw and a concession to Germany. Please vote by next deadline.

Press:

RIP VAN WINKLE (THE KRAUT VERSION) to GM: Regarding (y)our latest little RIGELIAN Affair, wake me up when it's all over... Zzzzzzzz.

BERLIN to PARIS: Birds of a feather ~~fly~~ take it to the limit together...

~~~~~



The Goasip Column

From Steve Howe (in England):

Dear Bruce,

Today (17th July) I received the three copies of VD you sent on 30th May. Issue #96 arrived about a month ago. Odd postal system this.

I've given it some thought, but I still don't know just why I went and changed my hard-earned wages into these odd-looking banknotes with unfamiliar faces on them (Hamilton? Who's a Hamilton?) and sent them off for a zine I know nothing about -- and in a foreign language, too! Still, I'm glad I did, 'cos VD's a terribly impressive publication.

The first thing that struck me was its sheer size. I'm no expert -- I only see a fairly narrow range of zines -- but 80 pages for a normal issue is unprecedented as far as my limited experience goes, certainly for a one-man effort. Mind you, for such a huge, long-lived and obviously regular zine, there are remarkably few games, but no openings for more. Why? Don't you like running games? Or are you too busy typing up another huge issue? Or perhaps that's a normal American trait?

Hmm -- must try to keep this letter coherent. It is perhaps not surprising, since it is normal practice on my side of the Atlantic, that I prefer an editor who edits letters, rather than publishes them in full. This is mainly because I write rather long, rambling letters, usually over the course of several days. (My record is a letter which I wrote, on and off, for eight months. It reached 50 pages.) Still, it's your zine, so you do it the way you want, and the hell with convention.

Talking of conventions (neat link, huh?), I've been following with something akin to fascination the apparently interminable build-up to the presidential elections. The American political scene fascinates me (though let it be said that I understand very little of what goes on -- rather like my addiction to U.S. football -- it's a wonderful game, but it would take all the fun out of watching it if I understood what was going on (up the Falcons!)), the more I see, the more I want to see. It is not the politics or the personalities which wow me -- I honestly don't care who wins -- it's the procedure, the organization, the enthusiasm, the razzamattaz. The scenes I saw of the Democratic convention -- the hall packed with cheering, jeering, placard-waving, thoroughly turned-on people contrasted amazingly with the British attitude. The British are basically apathetic (I've heard it said somewhere that our greatest strength as a nation is our disinterest in politics), they'll turn out to vote every four years or so, but in between times, the majority don't really want to know. Mind you, you Yanks know how to do things with style. Perhaps our politics are so boring 'cos they're so dull.

I'm interested to see that you're a devotee of what you term the European hobby. (I hate that term. I am not a European, except by geographic accident. I am also not a Briton, except on official forms. I am an Englishman, but you can call me a Limey.) I only get one of the zines you single out as one of your particular favorites -- NMR!. The special issue 50 was a remarkable effort, which could lift NMR! to the top in the forthcoming zine poll. The "guy getting a shave bit" I found rather funny. I don't know whether you realize it or not, but it is part of British folklore -- Sweeney Todd, the demon barber of Fleet Street. Customers were shaved rather close, and were then used as the prime constituent of meat pie, which sold at a considerable profit due to the imaginative coating system. Put a whole new meaning into having someone for dinner.

I must say that I'm left a bit cold by all this discussion of GMing and house rules. Personally, I don't read house rules, 'cos they're all the same -- usually copied from someone else's. I can't see that any two sets of house rules can be drastically different -- can they? You think they can? Look, tell you what, I don't intend to play any games in American zines, the postal situation being what it is, but I'm curious for a peek at your house rules...

P.S. Since you enjoy explaining the derivation of BRUX, I'll ask.

P.P. 3 Does this make me a loyal screaming Doomie?

((Anyone who would ask to see the Houserules must be a loyal, screaming Doomie! Actually, though, the term applies to all of my readers, many of whom are loyal and some of whom scream and a few of whom fall into both categories.

I had had the impression that people from the United Kingdom talk about little other than politics. This impression was reinforced when I met Simon Billennese, who is very well-versed on the subject and loves to discuss it. I guess a sample of one isn't very significant, though.

Believe it or not, running games (and discussing how I run them) is a very enjoyable activity to me -- easily the best part of publishing. But I found that running eight or nine games all at once was too tiring and too risky. There were times when I almost didn't get the zine out on time. Running three or four games is very comfortable indeed. I'm making fewer errors now than ever before, and having a ball. Don't get me wrong, though -- I enjoy the other parts of publishing too. If you were to send me a fifty-page letter, I'd probably print it without batting an eyelash. You think I'm kidding? Most of my readers'll back that up!

The origin of BRUX, eh? I don't recall that I've ever explained that in print. The story is something like this (I don't have all the details because I wasn't around at the time...): my mother and father got together one night in 1954 and... hey, why am I explaining this out loud in public? Now, a number of people have asked for the origin of BRUX's name (and gotten it), but you should be able to figure out the origin of BRUX!))

(What a stupid answer...oh well.)

From Michael Lee:

Dear Bruce (BRUX) (What-Have-You),

Thanks for the book of Houserules; however, they are about four months late. I'm not about to insult Rod by axing his fine set of rules (although I will allow 1 and 2-center powers to have veto rights). Anyway, I don't think houserules are that significant; the only game I'm GMing has seven extraordinarily friendly people in it who will probably not cry foul so long as common sense rules. (The game features Joan Extrom, Gary Coughlan, "Easy" Al Villaneuva, Kevin Kozlowski, Joe Kott, "Eugene's Own" Paul Gardner and Mr. Fun, Terry Tallman.) If hell freezes over and I do cut Rod's HRS as a result, your HRS are tops on my list of replacements. I have a feeling that this is what you thought I'd say, but thanks for the generous offer.

As for printing FIM, you must realize that I live by the rule -- no harm, no foul. I enjoy FIM as a rule, although the prophet of the West does not. After all, it was in FIM that TCOE was called "America's Premiere Game Journal". Hence, FIM is always welcome in TCOE.

When you print my other letter please edit anything that I said that was stupid (watch, folks, it won't appear at all now!). I continually forget that my letters are going to be quoted publicly. Oh, by the way, by all means print this letter -- it's my "I want the Socrates Award in '85" letter. Let's see, what controversial figure haven't I praised?

Oh yes, I enjoyed Dick Martin's letter in VD #96 (I'm also enjoying a game in LOM with Dick and me in it). The letter was amusing if for no other reason than it got you to say, and I quote pg. 40, "...I don't have to pay for unsolicited items that I receive through the mail." Well, Laddy-buck, put your pennies where your mouth is. Your HRS arrived with 17 cents postage due! I mention this not out of greed or nastiness, but only to prove that I read your ~~zines~~ zines -- note the direct quotation.

Your hobbytalk column is fine with me, in fact it inspired me to alter my letter from the editor column in TCOE. I realize that my opinion runs contrary to Kathy Byrne's but that does not mean that I no longer think that Kathy has impeccable taste. However, if you so much as hint at bad-mouthing TCOE -- America's Premiere Game Journal -- why I'll, why I'll..probably do nothing.



((Hey, thanks for a nice letter (again). You mean my house rules weren't worth the 17¢? Oh well, I'll pay you back...))

The fact that a game has seven extraordinarily friendly people in it who will not cry foul is no reason to stay away from house rules. Really now, I'll just bet that Terry Tallman would leap into the air in a fit of ecstasy if you were to adapt mine. Try it and see. Rod's rules are better than most (I've seen them), but not really very comprehensive.

Socrates Award, hah? Well, you're going to have to do better than this. Stop trying to strip VD of its rightful title as America's Premiere Game Journal. Then maybe I'll support you for the award. Then again, how are you going to beat out Joan for that honor?

I agree that Dick's letter in VD #96 was amusing. Thanks for writing.))

From Jeff Noto (7/16/84):

Dear Bruce,

This is going to be the most negative-sounding letter I have written to you. However, there were some comments in VD #97 which I simply must respond to.

My first words are directed to John Pack. First, John, let me tell you a little about myself. I am a Roman Catholic. I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ (or Messiah, whichever you prefer). I have tried to the best of my abilities to use his teachings (as well as some of my father's and Leo Buscaglia's) as the foundation for my own personal philosophy of life. However, I cannot agree with your views on homosexuality.

Jesus was often found in the company of tax collectors, Gentiles, Samaritans, and prostitutes. These people were in his day looked down upon as homosexuals are by some in our day. If we are to love one another as he loved us, shouldn't we include all the undesirables as he did? While I don't condone homosexuality, I don't see how tolerating the presence of homosexuals makes me less of a good Christian.

Even if this is not the case, how are we to decide what is tolerance of a homosexual? Are we to eradicate the teachings of Socrates, Aristotle and Plato? Shall we burn all the works of Gertrude Stein, Oscar Wilde, and Edward Albee? Should we rescind Dag Hammarskjöld's Nobel Peace Prize? Is it wrong for us to admire the military genius of Lawrence of Arabia? Must we resign from all games in which Rod Walker or Larry Peery are also players? I think not.

One of the guys I work with at the motel is a homosexual. Both of us work hard and do a good job. If I'm to be a good Christian, must I go to my employer and say that if this guy continues to work at the motel, I quit? I think not.

Now, these next few paragraphs are for you, Bruce. You say that prostitution is a "victimless crime". If all acts of prostitution occurred between consenting adults, I'd be inclined to say yes. Regrettably this is not true.

Research by experts (which includes social workers, police departments, and clergymen) shows that the majority of prostitutes in our major cities are under the age of 16. Some are as young as 8. These kids are either runaways (who leave home for many reasons: to escape abusive parents, because they feel unloved, because they're looking for excitement or they fear punishment for a wrong done back home, etc.) or throwaways (they've been told by their parents to leave mainly for disciplinary or financial reasons). They come to the big cities looking for jobs. Since they can't be hired legally (age requirements), their only way to survive is to sell the only thing they have left: themselves.

Some kids escape through public agencies and privately funded runaway shelters. Most feel that they can't return home and are thus stuck where they are. They will eventually outgrow their usefulness in the eyes of the pimp (you can only keep someone from looking used for so long) and are either sent back out onto the street jobless, broken-spirited, and penniless -- or killed for fear they may talk.

I should also point out that young boys make up roughly 50% of the nation's

prostitutes; their purpose is different. While young girls are almost always sold to men, a sizeable majority of a boy's encounters are of a homosexual nature. And in some places it's easier for a boy to sell himself than a girl.

These CHILDREN, Bruce, are the victims of prostitution. They have no family, they are often abused by their pimps (not only physically and/or sexually, but the pimp will try to get the kid hooked on drugs to keep him cooperative), and they feel trapped. This is why pornography and prostitution must be stopped.

Well, I think I should stop here for now. Enclosed will be my responses for the ethics article and hopefully an article of my own for the anniversary issue. Another letter will follow soon.

Love,  
Jeff

((Oh boy, another love letter! Keep 'em coming, Doomies!

I didn't find your letter at all negative in tone. I almost left out the religious parts toward the beginning, hoping not to get the subject started here in ID, but let it go by. If I were religious, I'd agree (I think) with your homosexuality argument. As it is, let me just say that my morals seem to dictate to me about the same thing that your religion dictates to you.

Re prostitution: First of all, I didn't list prostitution as a "victimless crime". The items listed were homosexuality, masturbation, premarital sex, and pornography (in most cases, I was careful to add). To that list, I would add prostitution between consenting adults. Obviously no one in his right mind could condone the act of child prostitution (or for that matter, child pornography). The picture you paint is sad but true. I could (but won't) tell a sad story about a kid where I used to teach... but to make the blanket statement that pornography and prostitution must be stopped is wrong and is not consistent with the rest of your letter. When only adults are involved, and they are acting out of choice, then these are victimless crimes. As a side note, I feel that what happened to our dear little Miss America was disgusting. Kind of like declaring a game irregular 'cause the GM didn't let a player hold while supporting, or some such.

Hey, I hope you'll still get me an article for the anniversary; it'll have to be fast now though. Pretty please?))

From Kevin Stone (7/15/84):

Dear BRUX,

Greetings from the semi-employed college grads of America. I'm working at the Corning Fire Department right now until I find a real job. At least it leaves me free to attend KaneKon. I'll also be at BRUKON if at all possible.

Why did you always send me the biggest issues around finals time and now that I've got free time you come out with skinny issues? Overall, I think I like the smaller issues. 40 pages of #97 seemed just about right.

Hobbytalk: From what I understand, High Plains Gonzo is delayed because Jake had abdominal surgery on July 6th. I don't think it was too serious, though. I'll be glad when it gets here because I have no idea where I stand in the Gonzo Baseball League. In real baseball it's been fun watching the Mets and laughing at Kane's Yankees. Too bad those stupid Dodgers couldn't have done better over the weekend in Chicago.

Robert Acheson: While I'm on the subject of baseball, it's time to defend the National League. Although the Birds won last year, the Senior Circuit holds a slight edge (8-7) in World Series competition since the beginning of divisional play (1969). In addition, the NL usually cleans up in the All-Star game, winning again this year, 3-1. Need more proof that the National League is stronger? The best team of the 1970s, the Red of 1975-76, were in the National League. The defense rests.

Face-to-face: On Saturday I rode from Big Flats to Tom Swider's house in Endwell with Alex and Robert Service for some FTF gaming. Tom Mainardi, Mike Barno, and Karl Russell were among the participants. I think we had around 15 people altogether. The

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first game I played was 4-player "Ulcers", a pretty weak game won by Mainardi. Some other people played "Nuclear Escalation". After that, Barno won a 7-car race on "Speed Circuit's" Monaco course. Barno struck me as a pretty crazy kind of guy, somebody I'd like to get to know better. He left around 3:30 to go work at Shangri-La Speedway. Before he left, we played 6-person Acquire. I said I'd only played once, and that you had kicked my ass. Barno made the mistake of then saying that he had kicked your ass. From then on, almost everyone's moves were based in part on how it would affect Barno. He finished out of the money in a game won by Karl Ruseell. Tom Swider didn't fare too well in his tuneup for the Atlanticon Acquire tourney.

At 4:30 a large (6-8 players) game of Dune started among veteran Duners. In the meantime, three guys and I played "Trivial Pursuit" with the "Baby Boomer" edition. We finally gave up after about an hour and a half because nobody had more than three pieces of cheese. I think the game is better suited for team play. The Dune game finally ended around 10:30, with Tom Swider being a poor host by winning the game. Overall, it was a very good time. There were plenty of munchies and a good supply of Beck's beer. I saw a lot of games I'd only heard about, and got to play a few of them. Tom is planning another big get-together in the fall (October?).

Brad Willson: Where a person lives is, of course, a personal choice, but Brad's thinking is a bit strange. It's like saying, "The only fruits I would ever eat are apples, oranges, peaches, pears and grapes. Those are the only five I've ever eaten, but I love them." A bit of advice, Brad: don't knock something till you've tried it. You could shut yourself out of a great opportunity somewhere down the line. If you refuse to relocate. As for the HOL issue, I can't think of any "trade" journals that restrict those who sub. If you've got the bucks you can get almost any magazine.

John Paok: A belief in a Christian God prohibits personal toleration of homosexuals?? Are we reading the same Bible, John? (I assume the Bible is your base.) Almost all of what Jesus Christ taught was (in the final analysis) to love your fellow man. In fact, he went out of his way to associate with prostitutes, lepers, etc. He didn't exclude anyone that wanted to listen from his ministry.

Also, John, would you please tell me how masturbation is bad for society and in itself? You've really got a scoop if you've got an explanation. As I recall from my Psych course, telling an impressionable young person that masturbation is bad can lead to guilt and sexual deviancy later in life. Come out of the Victorian Age, John.

Skydiving: Is it a coming trend to talk about skydiving in a dipzine? In a recent issue of TMoBR (a great zine, by the way), I told about what was written on the back of my jump record card. My first jump was very similar to yours. Look for the story (maybe) in an upcoming TMoBR.

((Thanks for a long and interesting letter. I'll answer point by point, since you've sort of divided it into topics by name.

On Jake, I'm sure we all hope he'll be okay. He's had a rough summer and a lot of his friends, me included, are thinking of him.

You're right about the superiority of the National League in baseball, of course. But don't be too quick to put down the American League. They've had some reasonable talent over the years. For example, I think that Gehrig would have been a pretty good backup for Garvey, etc.

Barno crazy? Come to BRUXCON and find out for sure. We're all crazy there. Even me. I'm not that good at multi-player Acquire, though I do all right when there's only one opponent.

It is possible to like something so much that you wouldn't want to change it, even without having checked out the alternatives. For example, when I go to Lake George, there's always one cabin I stay in -- I've never stayed in any other there. But I'm happy just the same because I'm used to it and I enjoy it. I'm sure Brad feels that way about Philadelphia.

John Paok's beliefs are certainly, um, entertainings, aren't they?

Re skydiving: I probably won't try it again, but reading about that recent tragic accident in Colorado nearly changed my mind. I'll watch for your writeup in TMoBR.)

From John Pack (7/17/84):

Dear Bruce,

I enjoyed the tiny #97. I'm glad that Ed didn't choose to bias the poll by voting. I see that he avoided any interference by not writing for the first time in months. Must be all those round-table discussions on ethics and interference that did it.

Actually, Bruce, the trick is to write an article everyone enjoys, but not reveal all the tricks you need to have even a slight chance of ~~surviving~~ survival in your own games. Actually, you'll never believe how foolish it was of me to write that FTF players should always eliminate the GM first so that he-she would have plenty of time to fix the refreshments. I haven't won (or, for that matter, come in above 6th) since John MacFarlane told everyone about that. I guess I'll have to start playing at other people's houses, eh?

I enjoyed "Doomie Static", and it is now perfectly clear that you, yes, YOU, have interfered in every one of your games. Of course, by offering a game opening, you have caused the game -- clearly interference.

Of course, everyone knows that Thetick/Oaklyn has moved and assumed yet another pseudonym... (sarcasm, but possible, I suppose).

You'll have to tell me if the second paradrop is any different from the first.

I'm surprised by the finish of several zines, but I guess there's the breaks. I agree with John MacFarlane about the suggestion Ig Lew made. I used to get some 20 zines, but now I only sub to the ones I really like, though I am scouting around for a few more. Do Sacks and Walker still put out game opening lists? (Was it a grave error to put both of them in the same sentence?)

The Boardman Number Janitor can assign numbers or not assign them, right? Of course, if one chooses not to assign numbers, then it's time to get a new BNJ. No one could declare a game irregular before it has even begun, so no game could really be denied a number.

I'm an Eagle Scout and a Vigil Honor Member of the OA, but living here in the mountains, I never met up with your criticism of slacking camping requirements. It is a valid point, though. I love backpacking, hiking, etc. That, and building good citizens, are the purposes of scouting. I'd love to be a scoutmaster some day (in the West, of course, where the mountains are).

My political remark interpreted simply means that I think that everyone should think about the whole rather than just themselves; general interest in everyone's welfare, instead of the special interest in their own piece of the pie.

I don't think I've ever made such a brief political comment before. I'm sure you're brokenhearted about the loss of a potential three or four pages, eh?

Well, if there are no game openings, just make sure I'm on the standby list and the waiting list and all the other lists. I'll see if I can come up with some VD for you on the computer.

((Following this is well over a page of material on the homosexuality controversy, which, alas, John has asked me to leave out since writing it. Part of it was too religious for VD anyway, but most of it was really pretty juicy. I'll hold onto it and maybe John will change his mind in time to let me print it in the annish.))

PS. Your statement that the initials are VD and not VOD is a direct contradiction of your House rules. HR Section 4.B (on abbreviations) states that both are valid. Perhaps an amendment?

((I still prefer VD. It's always exciting to get VD, especially from someone you loves. And VD #100 will feature a bit of your computer's artwork.

You are wrong to state that a game cannot be declared irregular before it begins. For example, consider the games Wes Ivess is running on the Wordworks (an electronic mail zine). Kathy has rules that those games are variants (and therefore irregular), and consequently has refused to assign them Boardman Numbers, a decision with which I agree, by the way.

You can't be on my standby list and all the other lists. The VD standby list and the VD blacklist are mutually exclusive.

Sacks and Walker both still put out game opening lists, though Sacks' list is often filled with irresponsible barbs directed at other hobbyists. Stick to Rod's.))

From Steve Knight (7/15/84):

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BRUKER,

Boy, oh boy, oh boy, loads of juicy stuff in the last couple of issues. So what happened to the non-controversial BRUK we met in VD #74? We're obviously being treated to the very entertaining work of an imposter!

Look, if you want to subordinate your personal life to the fact that you're running a game, fine. You realize, of course, that that's insane. ☺

Oh, congratulations on "coercing" Kim Dent to change one of his house rules. (That was a lead-in, Bruce. You are now supposed to relate the incident to the ninety-nine million and get up on your soapbox. You're welcome.)

Hey, Ruth Glaespey's liate look like fun. Okay:

1. Five people I'd like to have over for dinner:

David Lynch (director of Eraerhead, The Elephant Man, and Dune)

Woody Allen

Orson Scott Card (writer, mostly SF, of Songmaster, Unaccompanied Sonata)

Alan Houhanness (American composer, of Scottish-Armenian descent)

Donald Knuth (author of The Art of Computer Programming)

Runners-up would include Stanley Kubrick, Dennie M. Ritchie, Edgar Dijkstra, John Fowles, Leonard Bernstein, Sam Shepard, Harlan Ellison, Robert Pirsig, Frank Zappa, Marvin Harris...

2. Five people I'd have liked to have over for dinner:

Josquin dea Prez (Renaissance composer)

Dante

Fritz Lang (director of Metropolis, M)

Samuel Johnson

Sir Thomas More

Runners-up include Geoffrey Chaucer, John Garner, Socrates, Plato, Vladimir "Bill" Tytla (10 free issues of VD to the first Doonie who knows who this is!), Peter Tchaikovsky, Modeste Moussorgsky, Wolfram von Eichenbach...I could go on and on...

3. Five historical events at which I would like to have been present:

The Battle of Agincourt

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech

Cicero's first oration against Catiline

The trial of Socrates

The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth

I'll decline on the "five books" list -- I always have too hard a time narrowing it down...

Oh, joy -- on to the backlash about my Reagan comments. I had hoped that my statements were relatively innocuous enough to avoid a debate, but I guess not. In any event, please notice, folks, that I was not and am not making any proclamations one way or the other about Reagan's overall "desirability" -- I'm merely commenting on this one issue. With this in mind...

Yes, yes, congress (not the small "c") sets the budget. This does not, however, "absolve" the office of the Presidency from its role in setting the overall agenda by which congress actually draws up the budget. I don't see the consistency, then, in blaming Carter for all economic ills during his administration, yet blaming congress for all economic ills during Reagan's. It seems to me that "blame" should be shared between the two (congress and the Presidency), regardless of administration. (Given that, the sentence of mine which Greg quoted is probably an overstatement, now that I think of it. Insert the word "largely" before the word "responsible".)

Now, before I get back to the "Democratic President getting what he wants from a Democratic congress" argument, let me point out that Reagan has been remarkably successful at "getting what he wants" out of congress, despite the party difference. Much of his agenda has been followed -- defense spending is up, social programs have been cut back (note: I am not making any comment on the merit of these actions...) -- but not to the letter of the President's recommendations. It never is; bear in mind that politics involves compromise, lots of it. To suppose that congress would, or

should, pass Reagan's, or any other President's, budget recommendations verbatim is politically naive, it seems to me. Yes, congress has its share of responsibility for economic ills. So does the President. As I said last letter, each see spending as a panacea for different things.

Gads -- I should know better than to get into discussions. In any event, I would have hoped that Greg would have had as much respect for my intelligence as I have for his. To suggest, after reading my one paragraph, that I don't think for myself and am blindly spouting "campaign rhetoric" which I have learnt seems a bit uncharitable.

And now, moving on to issue #97 of Voice of Steve Knight's Press Agent... "Pillar of the hobby", my eye. You tell someone you're not going to publish the negatives you have of him and he gets so grateful...

Sorry, BRUX, but our present Zip code system isn't all it's cracked up to be -- remember the flap when it was instituted? A 5-digit number was bad planning, because it's not readily expandable. I, for one, believe that a 9-digit Zip would save the USP'S money, and is therefore worthwhile, but I don't think it's going to fly. The main reason is that we best remember arbitrary sequences of digits in groups of three or four -- one of the reasons our phone numbers work well. Five digits, though, breaks up the rhythm too much, so I think we'll have too much reaction against it to ever fully implement. I think it would have gone down much easier had they started with a six-digit and were now going to add three. Oh, well, I only know what I read in Psychology Today, so I could be way off base here.

I'd urge you, if at all possible, to not be as hard-line on Ed Wrobel, at least as far as his printing my letter goes. He and I corresponded afterwards, and his printing that paragraph of mine telling him to keep the rest of the letter NFP was basically an attempt at a joke, one that fell a bit flat, as he admits, given the general climate at the time. In that context, I think it was clever and can appreciate it -- and I myself have little doubt that Ed would genuinely respect any truly confidential material marked NFP. At the time, I wanted a portion of that letter kept NFP because I wanted to express my sentiments (about your editorial retaliation) to you privately, not feeling that the public forum was appropriate. I think Ed was just poking fun at the seriousness with which I was approaching the issue -- and baiting you a little, of course.

PASCAL is a pretty good language -- Peter Ansoff is right in saying the data structuring is useful in Dip applications. I've been working on a similar package for awhile, but in C. (Hey, Peter, if you'd like to exchange insights...) C is rather similar to PASCAL, but it's not strongly-typed and is a hell of a lot more flexible -- but that, of course, gives you more ways to screw up. C is also the only language any self-respecting UNIX hack would use. ~

I don't know whether or not to be amused or horrified by John Pack's letter about homosexuality. Hell, "gays can't be shot on sight, so they already have enough protection"? Go back to the 1950s and substitute "blacks" for "gays" -- can't be shot on sight, but they can be ostracized, prevented from holding certain jobs, living in a certain section of town... The off-base remark about "Any gay following me with lusty looks in his eyes..." is based on the unreal misconception that homosexuals are homosexual first (and obsessed with sex, to boot), and people second. The fact that someone is homosexual does not mean that he or she is constantly on the prowl for someone of the same sex, just as someone's being heterosexual does not mean he or she is constantly on the prowl for someone of the opposite sex. Sure, there are examples of such people on both sides of the fence, but so what?

Getting on to John's second letter, his analysis of the causes of homosexuality is a crock. Many gays get along quite well with women, but simply aren't interested in them sexually. And many gays are well aware of their orientation far before puberty.

And who says a belief in the Judeo-Christian God prohibits tolerance of homosexuality? How do you reconcile this with denominations such as the United Church of Christ, which ordain homosexual ministers? Thanks, John, for telling me how I may or may not conduct my own beliefs. I suspect, though, that John will try to throw Leviticus back at me to "prove" that since I'm a Christian, I must be intolerant of homosexuality. All I can say is anyone who quote Leviticus to me had better not have ever eaten any pork in his life...



You're right that John gives no evidence for the social harm of homosexuality. Actually, it's a classic example of the logical fallacy of post hoc, ergo propter hoc. He basically says, "See? Roms had homosexuals. Rome fell. Therefore..." Gosh -- I guess I am ignorant of the side effects of homosexuality on society. I'll let John fill me in -- but I hope he can show a good cause-effect relationship.

And, oh yes, there's another threat to any gay who "puts his hands" on John. Okay, we get the picture; we all know you're heterosexual, John. I won't go into how a threatened violent reaction like this is generally prompted by fear of gender confusion. Me, I've been propositioned twice by other men. Yes, the first time was a shock, but it was no hassle. In retrospect, it's vaguely flattering that someone thought I was good-looking enough to proposition. Me, I have no confusion about my orientation and couldn't care less what anyone else thinks.

To answer MacFarlane's question, Gray Coughlan gave a very concise description of how the ISE will work in the latest EE. Say you want to sub to Denver Glout. You send me a check for, say, \$10.00 and tell me it's for Glover Rogerson for a sub to DG. I send word of your request to Doug Howling in Scotland, who "converts" it into pounds based on that day's exchange rate, and sends the corresponding British amount to Glover with a note saying it's for a sub for you. Piece 'o cake.

John's right about adjusting poll votes -- I vote in the same way, from a hypothetical "0" to a hypothetical "10", and putting the zines I get wherever they fit in between. I like the preference matrix myself.

"Prevailing anti-patriotic chant"? Hate to burst John Kelley's bubble, but patriotism is on the upswing -- a fact about which I'm sure he'll be depressed. ☹ He's right, though -- this "hyork" business does bite the moose. (What a great phrase!)

Getting back to the ISE, thanks much for the plug, Bruce. Your suggestion, though, that we publish lists of zines along with converted rates is unworkable. The basic problem is that since we use the exchange rate on the day we receive a subscription request, the list would become inaccurate very quickly. Additionally, neither of us sees much sense in duplicating the already existant services of 20 Years On in Britain and the Zine Register here -- at least as far as listing available zines goes. I'm more than happy to answer questions people have about specific zines at specific times for specific amounts, but keeping an ongoing list is pretty much beyond the scope of what the ISE is trying to do.

I could go on about other stuff, but this is long enough already, yes? Keep up the good work.

Love,  
Steve

((Sigh. I love how you love me...))

Your rebuttal to my criticism regarding the ISE is correct, of course. Thanks for setting me straight. Now, though, I have another comment. It seems to me that the sub money is going through one more person than is really necessary, thereby adding to the cost, the delay, and the risk of postal loss. Instead of the funds going from subber to you to Doug to Glover, why not just subber to you to Glover -- and, from the other side, British subber to Doug to American pubber? Think about it -- not that I want to mess up your system; you and Doug are performing a very valuable service, in my opinion.

I've only been propositioned once by a guy. I found it flattering, when I thought about it afterwards, though at the time I was so startled I'm afraid I gave him a rather brusque rebuff. ~~He didn't like it.~~

So, what happened to the good old non-controversial BRUK that introduced himself in VD #74, eh? He got raped and cried foul, basically. Seriously, I don't like to have to print some of the sorts of things that have appeared here recently. It's just a question of how much nonsense I want to let people read (and possibly believe) about me before I speak up.

I'm glad to hear that you think patriotism is on the upswing. I agree. Witness the upcoming landslide victory for the Reagan-Bush ticket in a couple of months. I'm glad I didn't grow up a few years earlier, and have to put up with the immature, destructive, unpatriotic attitudes of the college generation of the sixties.

Regarding the Wrobel controversy: Well, you certainly make it hard for me to stick to my guns on the matter. I mean, when both the person who wrote the letter and the person who published it agree that no harm was done, then who am I to argue? Nonetheless, I just think that Ed lucked out in that the person whose confidence was betrayed (you) isn't overly offended. Taking advantage of a technicality in order to sneak someone's not-for-print opinion into print isn't my idea of a good joke, and I doubt if I'd have taken it as lightly as you did.

I'm still not sure which five people I'd invite to dinner, but they wouldn't include Caruso, Byrnes, Tallman, Martin or Highfield. (w)

The Kim Dent incident will be related in Hobbytalk either this issue or next. It seems that VD has an influence even in Great Britain, where most of the hobby is disgustingly sane.

I notice that you took pains not to express your feelings about Reagan in your comments. Nevertheless, they oozed out of the paper anyway, you slime! Well, I'm voting for Uncle Ronnie anyway. After all, no good conservative would destroy the career of a fellow conservative (or try to), nor would he destroy the reputation of a fellow conservative!!!! (Or something like that...) ))

The following letter is printed here only for the purpose of irritating certain types who can't stand the sight of positive reinforcement. And because it was an egoboost, as well...

From James Early (7/23/84):

Dear Bruce:

Thanks very much for the copy of Supernova. I love it! It's given me more insight to the game than anything else I've read, maybe even the Gamer's Guide. It is really a fine publication, especially the articles by you, Bob Sergeant, and Mark Berch. Baumeister's articles are very interesting to read, too. I think you and the rest of the contributors deserve medals or something for devoting all that time to this fine project, and then only asking a buck for it! Supernova should receive some sort of award, and if it hasn't already, I'm going to do something about it!

By the way, I'm 16 years old, and I'm playing in two games right now (my first two) and am about to start a third and a variant. I'm also on 3 standby lists; 2 regular Dip games, and one variant. I play one game in Jeff Richmond's Probozz and 2 games (almost) and the variant (1898) in Howard Christie's Stabback. Both are fairly new zines. I'm also Austria in both my first and second game. (Ugh!)

I first heard about Supernova from Jeff in Probozz. Then when I was on vacation in California, I visited Rod Walker and saw it. I ordered it immediately when I arrived home. I'm enclosing 2 stamps, so please send me a copy of Voice of Doom. I've heard many good things about it (especially from Rod).

Anyway, thanks again, I think you're doing a great service to the hobby, so keep up the good work. You'll probably be hearing from a couple of my hometown friends soon, because I won't let them borrow my copy of Supernova! You've definitely won a good friend in me!

PS. Why do Rod and others call you "BRUX"?

PPS. How about Supernova II?

((Does this mean you liked Supernova?

"BRUX" is just a hobby nickname. Since you're so new to the hobby, I don't feel it'd be proper to let you in on the deep, dark secrets surrounding my Glorious Nickname. But a few more letters like this might change my mind...

I think you made a good choice by playing in Probozz (I don't get Howard Christie's zine). But if I may offer some good advice, please don't get yourself into too many games at once. I know exactly how enthusiastic you feel, but believe me, you don't need to join a bunch of games. Stick with two or three. And I hope you derive as much enjoyment from the hobby as it's given me for years now. Thanks for writing!))

From Conrad Minshall (7/27/84):

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Dear Bruce,

...Funny. I was in a foul mood last time I wrote you too. This time I think I'll haesle you instead of Martin.

I disagree with your etand that it is imposeible to write a Diplomacy playing program which negotiates. I'm currently working on my second degree in Computer Science. My specialization is in Artificial Intelligence, particularly in natural language processing and game-playing. Such a program may take hundreds of "man-years", but I think we will see it within our lifetime. Cross your fingers.

While I'm getting on your case, I'd like to say that part of your answer to Rod Walker's letter (page 23, issue 97) really bothered me. You said, I believe, that Kathy sees her position (BNC) as a weapon to be used against people she doesn't like personally. I did not see there, nor have I seen elsewhere, any evidence which supports this serious claim. Perhaps, being new to VD, indeed, to the hobby, I have missed something? It would appear that you have only two sportsmanlike options: one, present incontrovertible evidence immediately; or two, retract the statement and apologize profusely. Personally, I hope you must choose the latter option -- I do not want to be disillusioned of my belief that Kathy can keep her BNC role separate from her other hobby activities.

((Thanks for the criticism; however, your argument is a nonsequitur. You are implying that unless I can prove that a certain threat was made, it wasn't. Since we are dealing with a phone conversation, nothing can be proved. That doesn't mean that the convereation didn't take place.

It could be (and has been) argued that I should have just ignored Kathy's threat to declare my games irregular. I don't buy this. The fact that I can't prove it only means that I'll have to rely on my general credibility with my readers, and very bluntly, I'm not afraid to do this. The story would indeed be a wild one just to pull out of thin air, methinks. But the whole situation goes beyond this one incident, too. I've been trying to ignore Kathy for years now, especially in the months just prior to the rekindling of our feud. I ignored some extremely ugly incidents at a couple of recent ByrneCons, e.g., and there were witnesses to these events. But when she made a threat to me involving her position as the BNC, I didn't feel I could keep quiet any longer. I'm sorry if this disappoints you; it doesn't thrill me, either.

I have repeatedly asked Kathy to disassociate herself from my games in writing. She has totally ignored these requests. I want to know why. I don't feel I should have to GM with her gun to my head. Thus the continued discussion of the matter in VD. So long as Kathy holds the position (and I've heard rumors both ways about her intention to keep it or resign), I do not feel I can get a fair hearing from her, not after she threatened me. Hrmph. Isn't there anyone out there who sees my point?

My tendency is to believe that a computer program couldn't negotiate successfully in a Diplomacy game; however, I am no expert on the subject of artificial intelligence. Since I'd like to approach the subject with a reasonably open mind, I have a request for you. Why don't you fill me and my readers in on just how one might program a computer to play Diplomacy? It would make a nice article for my fifth anniversary issue, I think, if it gets here in time. Would you like to write it for us? (Oh, I'm just so subtle about soliciting material, aren't I?!) ))

From Simon Billenness:

Dear BRUK,

How are you? Still hard at work designing weapons of mass destruction?

I am now happily employed as a dishwasher at "Cathy's Waffle Store" in Lark Street, after I just happened to walk in when their old dishwasher had quit giving one day's notice. The "joint" is small and full of friendly. ((??)) I've certainly enjoyed the two days I've worked there so far. I hope this continues.

You should find enclosed with your Flame a few copies of a rather nifty British dipvariant "Range War". I'm doing my best to promote this variant in the States because not only is it based on a very clever idea: movable supply centre -- it's also very

balanced, playable, and above all fun. I expect you can imagine the opportunities a Wild West variant opens for dedicated prose writers.

Anyway I was hoping you might open a list in Voice of Doom for Range War, or at least reprint it to give it a little publicity.

Give us a ring sometime. Barbara and I will be carless by the weekend (Mrs. Passoff comes back from Hawaii so we have to give it back). Perhaps we could fix you a meal, have a good chat, and then wander off elsewhere for a dessert (or something).

((I will reprint Range War in my upcoming anniversary issue. I don't often discuss variants here, but Range War does look intriguing, and maybe one of the GMs who reads it will want to open a section.

Since this letter was written I have gotten together with Simon twice, one of those being when Joan and Samantha were here. I find it fascinating to discuss with him the different people and outlooks in both of our hobbies.

Lots of luck, Simon, and don't eat too many of Cathy's Waffles!))

From Ty Hare:

BRUX,

Very concisely, since you didn't ask for my opinion, a comment on Bill Highfield and your handling of his threats on your life. I would have reported him to the local police and the F.B.I. One doesn't report death threats to the threatener's employer (who just happens to be the U.S. Navy). I doubt you'd have called McDonald's or Wendy's if Mr. Highfield had worked for one of those organizations. Call the cops.

Other stuff I've heard only in passing -- Kathy quitting the BNC, Tallman giving you a hard time... I don't know enough about any of this stuff to really comment on it. I will say that feuding is much easier and safer within the confines of the game. Once it gets without the context of the game, it gets dangerous, personal and -- well (though feuding in the first place is not my idea of fun). You certainly find out who your friends are, though.

Hang tough. If you think it's worth the effort.

((I'm amused that you feel that I'm involved in these feuds out of choice, or because I think they're fun. Ty, you might as well walk up to somebody being mugged on the street and tell him that it's more fun to fight off opponents in a football game.

Would I have been doing Highfield any favor by going to the police instead of the Navy? He would have been arrested for a felony offense, and the Navy would have learned all the facts anyway. Plus, he is then saddled with an arrest record and very probably a prison term. (I checked; sending death threats through the mail is worth two to twenty years.) Going to the police would have been fine if I were out for Bill's blood. But what I really wanted was for someone with authority to sit Bill down and 1) tell him in no uncertain terms that his actions had to stop, and 2) decide whether Bill might conceivably be planning to carry out any of his threats. The police would have been useless for that. I therefore feel I did the right thing. I will agree that going to the police would have been a reasonable course of action, but it wasn't the only reasonable one, and in this case not the best one.

I have other letters on the Highfield Affair and other topics, which will have to wait for the annals to see the light of print. I'm still about a month behind in letters. I will be caught up next month.))

From Mark Frush (8/19/84):

Dear Bruce,

Concerning the feud you are involved in -- I'm glad to read your side -- my thoughts are mixed -- I doubt that either one of you is totally innocent.

((Horror! You dare to question my innocence?! By the way, which feud do you mean?))

Just when you thought VD was getting too bland...

### The RIGEL Affair

Quick question, Doomies: the Russian player signs a blank sheet of paper and sends it to France. France fills in some orders for Russia, and forwards the paper to the GM. Are these orders valid?

If you said yea, you agree with me and probably most other GMs. The Russian orders are valid even though France wrote and mailed them, because the signature on the paper belonged to Russia. Indeed, I have accepted such orders in the past.

Now let's change the question just a bit. The Russian player writes France a letter, signs it at the bottom, and sends it. France crosses out the text of the letter, leaving the signature untouched, fills in some Russian orders, and forwards the paper to the GM. Are these orders valid? Before you say no, keep in mind that there is a Russian signature on the paper! Therefore, what is really the difference between this question and the first one? The intent of the Russian player? But GMs can't take intent into account -- the GM must simply adjudicate what is there; no more, no less.

I was faced with this dilemma last season in the RIGEL game. The Russian orders printed in VD #98 were not in fact those sent in by Russia (Dave Kleiman), but rather were received in the form of a letter from Kleiman to Ty Hare (the French player). Ty had crossed out the text of Dave's letter, leaving the signature untouched, filled in some orders for the Russian units, dated the orders close to the deadline so that they would be "later" than any orders Dave submitted, and sent this bogus document to me.

Ty had obtained a ruling in advance from me (it took me several days of deep thought to decide how I would rule) and told me precisely what he was doing, so deception of the GM did not enter into it. When I finally told Ty that I would accept the Russian orders as valid, I also warned him that my decision would in all probability be overturned by an ombudsman, should Dave ask for one.

The deadline came and went, and VD #98 went out with the bogus Russian orders. A few days later, while at KaneKon, I received a phone call from an irate Dave Kleiman, demanding to know who had submitted those orders. Ruefully, I gave him the whole story, and told him that if he cared to protest I would invoke the "Greater Good" rule in the VD Houserules, disallow the bogus orders, and send out a readjudication. He considered this carefully for perhaps a nanosecond, and protested. The readjudication was sent out, and appears this season with the RIGEL game report. The Russian orders printed there are the real ones submitted by Dave Kleiman.

It might be asked whether I was correct to accept the Russian orders Ty sent in to begin with. Very technically, I had to accept them, but common sense would dictate otherwise. After all, think of the ramifications: players could be ordering each others' units all the time, one player might take control of all seven countries, outsiders could submit order for players in a game, and so on; all provided they had correspondence from the player in question to which he had affixed his signature. Nobody in the hobby would be safe signing his name ever again. A simple sub check would become a blackmailing tool of monstrous proportions. Chaos would prevail. The hobby as we know it would cease to function.

The problem is that such common sense considerations generally cannot and should not play a role in these decisions. It is well known that in a Voice of Doom game, you have to operate under the assumption that the GM has no common sense. This is not to say that Bruce Linsey the person has no common sense, but only that he will be extremely niggardly in applying it to his games. Games are run by the rules, and goddammit, rules are meant to be followed.

However, that's what the "Greater Good" rule is there for: to override those situations which are so contrary to the dictates of common sense that even this GM is offended by them. Ty Hare has since called me a "wimp" for backing down without even going to an ombudsman, but the possibility remains, however slight, that the ombudsman might not have wanted to apply his common sense either and sustained my ruling on

those grounds -- and then boy would I be up shit creek!

On the other side of the coin, Nelson Heintzman (the German player) has accused me of "mental masturbation" for allowing the orders to begin with. I doubt this -- my brain would appear not to have yet reached puberty.

So what if it, Doomiee? I'd like to have some responses to this situation (which is not a gigantic hoax, by the way, in case anyone has any doubts) for next issue. Should I have allowed the bogus Russian orders? Was my later decision to disallow them correct? How can I avoid this sort of thing in the future? And why do these things always have to happen in Voice of Doom?

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This issue is probably going to set some sort of record for a VD issue containing games; it may well be in the mail on deadline night (Friday). Here it is several days before the deadline, and I've got just about everything done except for the games themselves. It's a very rare occasion when VD hits the mails as early as Saturday, let alone Friday night!

Folks, this is the LAST CALL for material for my Fifth Anniversary Issue. There are quite a few of you who have promised to send contributions, but haven't yet. Please help out with articles, letters, Doomie of the Year nominations, responses to the "Player Ethics" article in VD #97, or whatever. The issue is looking reasonably good at the moment, but every little bit helps. Let's make it a great one...but I need your stuff within the next week or two. Please.

Game results will go to the players separately by first class mail next month, but the issue itself will travel by a slower (and cheaper) means. Therefore, please don't panic when it doesn't show up on time -- it'll be on the way. This is the last call for submissions...get your mailboxes ready...VD #100 will be worth the wait, or my name ain't...

BRUX

Bruce Linsey
73 Ashuelot St., Apt. 3
Dalton, MA 01226

Rod- Your article is 2 typed pages & therefore worth 6 issues. Ronald Spitzer mentioned Pond when he subbed, so that's another issue. Therefore, your sub goes to #104.

*Beet,
BAUX*

Your sub expires with issue # $97 + 6 + 1 = 104$